

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (*Currently Amended*) An e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method for mediating commerce between a plurality of suppliers and a buyer via a digital data communication network, comprising the steps of:

[[(a)]] storing public data and non-public data in a database of an agent, said public data containing standardized attribute information about a product supplied by the plurality of suppliers, said public data able ~~being~~ enable to be viewed so as to compare the attribute information of each supplier's product ~~about the product of the respective suppliers with each other~~, said non-public data comprising ~~including~~ transaction rules set for each combination of a the ~~respective~~ supplier and the buyer;

[[(b)]] ~~said buyer's reading and viewing said public data from said database via said data communication network to select a desired product and to applying apply~~ to the agent for a transaction of a ~~the~~ selected product, wherein the buyer selects a product from said database via said data communication network;

[[(c)]] if the buyer has applied for a transaction, said agent reads agent's reading the transaction rules applicable to the buyer from said non-public data, prepares cost estimates ~~making estimates, and presents the cost estimates presenting them to the buyer, said transaction rules depending upon the buyer having applied for the transaction; and~~

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[[(d)]] selecting said buyer's determining a supplier and purchase conditions, wherein the buyer selects a supplier and on the basis of the cost estimate and said agent carries out an ordering procedure estimates presented in step (e); and

(e) said agent's carrying out ordering procedures for the buyer and the supplier on the basis of the purchase conditions.

2. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 1, wherein said database ~~for the agent further~~ stores conversion data indicating correspondence between code systems of different suppliers, wherein the code system of each supplier comprises ~~including~~ customer codes and product part numbers.

3. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 2, wherein product information to be transmitted from the agent to the buyer and the supplier is converted to information in code systems, each corresponding to the buyer or the supplier on the basis of the conversion data.

4. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 1, wherein the buyer can view said public data ~~cost-free freely in the step (b)~~.

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5. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 1, wherein the supplier registers, updates, maintains~~[],]~~ and administers said public data stored in said database.

6. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 1, wherein the agent stores an unalterable ~~a~~ record of the ordering procedures in a storage means ~~whose data cannot be altered in the step (e).~~

7. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method for mediating commerce between a plurality of suppliers and buyers via a digital data communication network, comprising the steps of:

[(a)] storing public data and non-public data in a database of an agent, said public data containing standardized attribute information about a product supplied by the plurality of suppliers, said public data able being enable to be viewed so as to compare the attribute information of each supplier's product ~~about the product of the respective suppliers with each other~~, said non-public data comprising ~~including~~ transaction rules set for each combination of a the respective supplier and the buyer;

[(b)] ~~said buyer's reading and viewing said public data from said database via said data communication network to select a desired product and to applying apply~~ to the agent for a transaction of a the selected product, wherein the buyer selects a product from said database via said data communication network;

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[[(c)]] if the buyer has applied for a transaction, said agent reads agent's reading the transaction rules applicable to the buyer from said non-public data, prepares cost estimatesmaking estimates, and presents the cost estimates presenting them to the buyer, said transaction rules depending upon the buyer having applied for the transaction;

[[(d-1)]] said buyer's starting negotiations with the suppliers on the basis of the cost estimateestimates to determine purchase conditions and a supplier; and

[[(e)]] said agent's ordering the selected product, wherein said agent carries carrying out ordering procedures for the buyer and the supplier on the basis of the negotiated purchase conditions determined in step (d-1).

8. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 7, wherein the purchase conditions already stored in the non-public data are replaced by the negotiated purchase conditions determined in the step (d-1).

9. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 7, wherein said database for the agent further stores conversion data indicating correspondence between code systems of different suppliers, the code system of each supplier comprises including customer codes and product part numbers.

10. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 9, wherein product information to be transmitted from the agent to the buyer and the supplier is

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converted to information in code systems, each corresponding to the buyer or the supplier on the basis of the conversion data.

11. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 7, wherein the buyer can view said public data cost-free~~freely in the step (b)~~.

12. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 7, wherein the supplier registers, updates, maintains~~[,]~~ and administers said public data stored in said database.

13. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 7, wherein the buyer determines a supplier and purchase conditions via ~~by using one of the methods of bidding conducted by the agent, individual negotiations, or and~~ an auction with the suppliers of the same products or services~~in the step (d-1)~~.

14. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to claim 7, wherein the agent stores an unalterable ~~a~~ record of the ordering procedures in a storage means ~~whose data cannot be altered in the step (e)~~.

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15. (*Currently Amended*) An e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ system for mediating commerce between a plurality of suppliers and a buyer via a digital data communication network, comprising:

a database for storing public data and non-public data, the public data able ~~being~~ enabled to be viewed by standardizing attribute information about the same products supplied by the plurality of suppliers so as to compare the attribute information of the products ~~product~~ with each other, and the non-public data comprising ~~including~~ transaction rules set for each combination of a supplier and the buyer;

a supplier site computer connected to said digital data communication network;

a buyer site computer connected to said digital data communication network; and

an agent site computer connected to said digital data communication network, wherein said agent site computer delivers said public data to said buyer site computer, makes cost estimates on the basis of said non-public data in response to an application for negotiations for ~~of~~ the desired product selected from the buyer site computer, and carries out ordering procedures for the selected product.

16. (*Currently Amended*) A database for use in an e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to ~~in~~ claim 1, wherein the database stores public data able ~~enabled~~ to be viewed by standardizing attribute information about the same products supplied by the plurality of suppliers so as to compare the attribute information with each other ~~and non-public data including rules conditions set for each combination of a supplier and a buyer~~.

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17. (*Currently Amended*) The database according to claim 16, wherein the database further stores conversion data indicating correspondence between supplier code systems comprising including customer codes varying according to a supplier and product part numbers.

18. (*Currently Amended*) A database for use in an e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method according to in claim 7, wherein the database stores public data able enabled to be viewed by standardizing attribute information about the same products supplied by the plurality of suppliers so as to compare the attribute information with each other ~~and non-public data including transaction rules set for each combination of a supplier and a buyer.~~

19. (*Currently Amended*) The database according to claim 18, wherein the database further stores conversion data indicating correspondence between supplier code systems comprising including customer codes varying according to a supplier and product part numbers.

20. (*Currently Amended*) An e-commerce brokering ~~broking~~ method for mediating commerce between a plurality of suppliers and buyers via a digital data communication network, comprising the steps of:

[[(a)]] providing a database that which stores public data and non-public data, said public data comprising including standardized attribute information about the same kind of products supplied from the plurality of suppliers, and said non-public data comprising including transaction rules set for each combination of a supplier and a buyer;

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[[(b)]] presenting said public data to a buyer site computer via digital data communication network so that a ~~the~~ buyer can compare a performance and price of the same kind of product of different suppliers to select a supplier supplying a desired product;

[[(c)]] receiving an application from the buyer site computer via the digital data communication network, the application being for transaction of the desired product of the selected supplier;

[[(d)]] reading the transaction rule set for the buyer and the selected supplier from said database, and making a ~~cost~~ ~~an~~ estimate to send ~~the~~ ~~estimate~~ to the buyer site computer;

[[(e)]] receiving a decision from the buyer site computer via the digital data communication network, said decision containing a supplier from which the buyer purchases the desired product and purchase conditions determined on the basis of the cost estimate ~~prepared in the step (d)~~; and

[[(d)]] conducting ordering procedures for the buyer and the supplier on the basis of the purchase condition ~~and the transaction condition~~.